(b) whether India-China had agreed, last year to withdraw their armed forces away from borders;

(c) whether Government propose to take steps to talk to China to restore status-quo-ante to keep the border peaceful; if so, the details for the proposal; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Sleepy Indo-China border comes to life" which appeared in the 'Hindustan Times' dated 18-6-1998. Contents of the news-item are the author's own perceptions and conclusions about the situation in India-China border areas.

2. No agreement was reached between India and China last year to reduce or limit military forces in border areas. An agreement on maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the line of actual control in the India-China border areas was signed by the two countries in September 1993. To further the process, another agreement on confidence building measures was signed in 1996 during the visit of the Chinese President to India. Provisions in these agreements, inter-alia, lay down some important guiding principles for reduction or limitation of identified categories of military forces deployed in mutually agreed geographical zones along the LAC to ceilings to be mutually agreed upon by both the countries in conformity with the principle of mutual and equal security. This is also linked with the clarification of India-China line of actual control.

3. Both India and China are committed to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas. They are also committed to work towards a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question.

Manufacturing of Nuclear Weapons

4594. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to manufacture nuclear weapons in the country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) India is a nuclear weapon state. The underground nuclear tests carried out by India on May 11 and 13, 1998 helped to create an effective deterrent against the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction against India. The devices that were tested in the series were an optimised fission device, a thermonuclear device and three sub-kilotonne devices.

Recruitment in Armed Forces

4595. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the recruitment to the three services have been reduced in Southern States;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the number of persons recruited to the armed forces has been reduced for the last three years; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and steps taken to recruit more persons?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.